

**HOW WILL A MEDIUM-SIZED POLICE AGENCY PROVIDE FOR THE
NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY POPULATION BY THE YEAR 2004?**

JOURNAL ARTICLE

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This Command College Independent Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue in law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future, but rather to project a number of possible scenarios for strategic planning consideration.

Defining the future differs from analyzing the past because the future has not yet happened. In this project, useful alternatives have been formulated systematically so that the planner can respond to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing the future -- creating it, constraining it, adapting to it. A futures study points the way.

The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College project are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be, The last of life for which the first was made. Robert Browning, 1864

Robert Browning's hope for the elderly may not be a possibility unless medium-sized police agencies like the Stockton, California Police Department begin to plan on how to provide effective service to the aging population.

Americans are living in exciting times. According to one author, Robert C. Holland, the issues of powerful global competition, rapid changes in technology, and changes in demographics are some of the profound issues that will dominate citizens as they navigate into the next millennium.¹ These dynamic forces will not only impact one another and American society, but will also have a profound effect on our growing elderly population.

The author became interested in this issue while a member of the California Peace Officer Standards and Training, Command College and began research on the topic. Research included a review of the literature, interviews with experts, and meetings with lay persons on the subject of the elderly population and their future needs.

At the beginning of the research, a purposeful effort was made to cast pre-conceived notions aside so that the study would be as empirical as possible. To that end, the author conducted interviews with people who work with members of the elderly population, and who are, therefore, familiar with the issues that confront them. It was nearly impossible, however, to totally reject some of the intuitive feelings one has relative to the aging of the population. For example, one of the major concerns facing the elderly that emerged from interviews with a committee of subject-matter experts, was an expected slash of Social Security benefits or other entitlements. This was not the case with the panel of ten community members with which the

author later consulted. The panel, representing a broad range of experience and expertise, was assembled for the purposes of discussing the needs of the elderly population and how they felt law enforcement would best provide for them. As a whole, they were mildly optimistic that the level of entitlement programs would slightly increase in the future. In addition, this same panel felt that funds should not be diverted from law enforcement in order to provide entitlements. They felt the growing and strengthening political clout of the elderly would keep entitlements from being slashed.

The author felt the panel of community members would be very concerned about the elderly becoming more and more susceptible to non-violent crimes of economic gain. There have been many articles written about the elderly being victimized in this way so it was felt the panel would naturally reflect that concern. This was not the case. In spite of the author pointing out the fact the elderly were more susceptible to crimes of economic gain than crimes of violence, the committee's interest could not be stimulated. They remained focused on the level of violent crimes against the elderly and felt they would continue to increase through the year 2005.

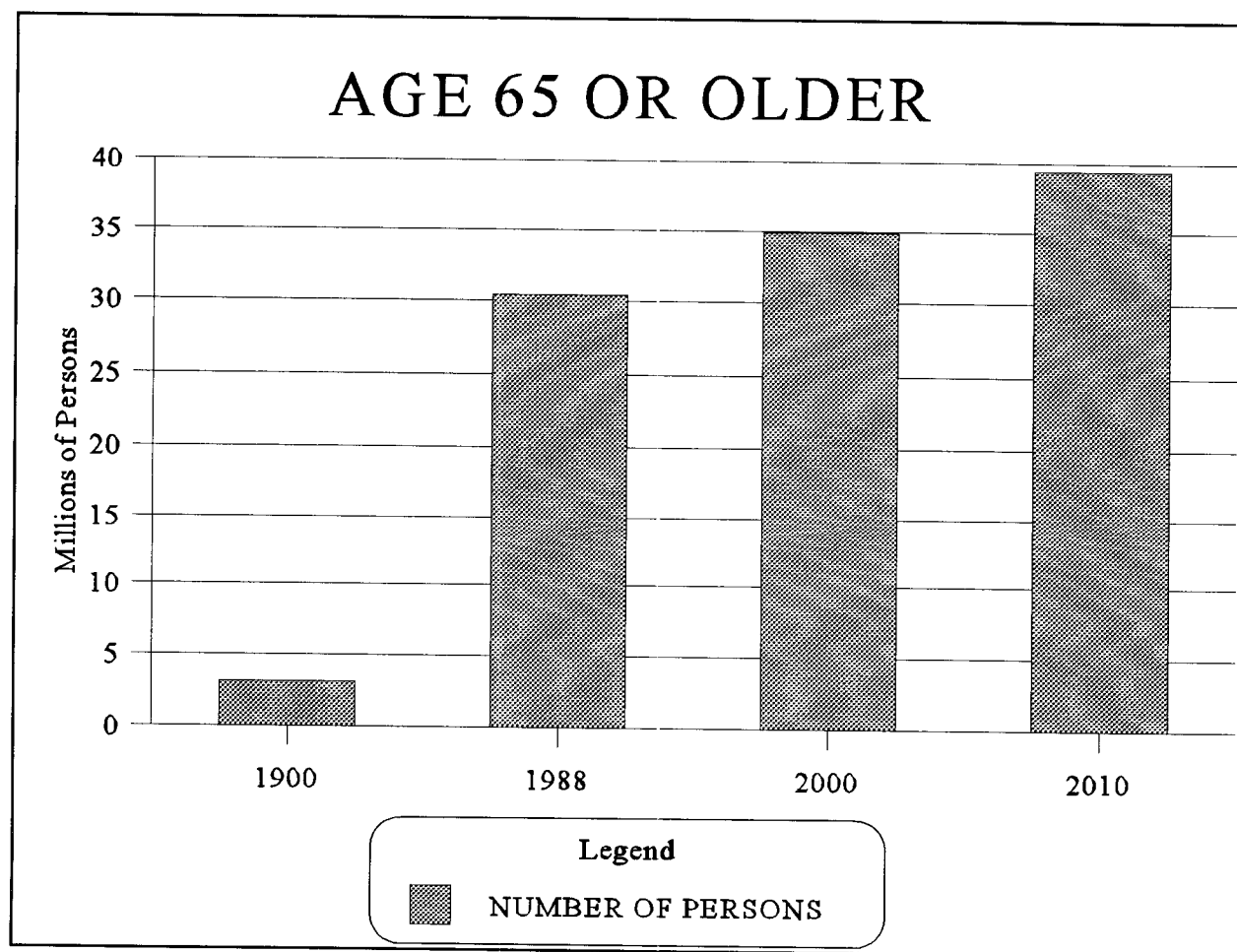
Growing Older

Getting older is a gradual, ongoing, inevitable process that is often not recognized by most people until they, themselves, are considered "elderly" by others. In searching for a nice neat definition for the term "elderly," one quickly realizes that it defies a compartmentalized approach. For example, to become a member of The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), which is generally associated with the elderly, one must be at least 50 years of age.² When one reviews the literature in this area, the age most often used for statistical purposes with respect to the elderly is 65. Author Ken Dychtwald explains that nearly 80 percent of Americans

will live past the age of 65, and there are now over 30 million persons over that age.³ An AARP publication says "70% of those born in the U.S. can expect to reach the age of 65."⁴

In the year 1900, there were approximately 3.1 million persons over the age of 65, compared to 1988 when approximately 30.4 million persons were age 65 or older. By the year 2000 it is estimated there will be approximately 34.9 million persons age 65 or older and by the year 2010, 39.4 million.⁵ (Illustration 1) Those persons age 65 and over are part of one of the fastest growing groups in the nation, with the exception of the age 85 and over group which is the fastest growing section of the elderly population.⁶

Illustration 1



It is important to realize that 65 years old is a chronological age and should not be considered an age when the human body stops working. AARP authorities indicate as follows:

"Chronological age only measures time; it does not have a direct effect upon the attitudes, behaviors, and capabilities of older adults. For example, a person who subjects their body to excessive stress, insufficient exercise, inadequate diet, immoderate consumption of alcohol, or does not receive proper medical care will probably age sooner than someone who has taken proper care of themselves."⁷

The fact is, Americans are living longer. During the life of William Shakespeare, (1564-1616) 70% of the children died by the time they were fifteen years old. Compare that to today when 70% of persons born in the United States are expected to reach the age of 65; and those who live to age 65 can, for the most part, expect to live until age 82.⁸ "Life expectancy is up" according to Robert J. Samuelson, in his *Newsweek* article, "Here's Some Good News, America." He indicated in 1991 that life expectancy was 76 years, compared to 71 years in 1970.⁹ Author Ken Dychtwald reports that according to some medical researchers and gerontologists, the upper range of the human life span, "may lie somewhere between 120 and 140."¹⁰ Given the fact that there is a growing number of elderly Americans, it is useful to understand some of the reasons that this is occurring.

Reasons for the Aging of America

The first reason that comes to mind for most people for the aging of America is the "baby boom" phenomenon. "Baby Boomers" comprise a population of 76 million people, born between 1946 and 1964. The first of this population will reach age 65 in the year 2011. It is also significant to note, however, that "baby boomers" are not reproducing as much as Americans of

prior generations. While there are twice as many women today of childbearing age, they are having only about half as many children. Author Dychtwald reports, "An estimated 20 percent of baby boomers will have no children at all; another 25 percent will have only one."¹¹ The trend of the increase in total population comprised of "baby boomers" combined with the decline in the birth rate will ultimately increase the total percentage of elderly persons.

Another reason Americans are aging is the enormous advances in technology and medicine during the past century. For example, smallpox has been eliminated, cholera is almost extinct in America, and "The death rate from tuberculosis, the leading cause of premature death a century ago, has been reduced by over 99.9 percent."¹²

Also affecting health and longevity is the fact that Americans are taking better care of themselves, and their diet has improved. Americans exercise more, live more active, full lives, and smoke less.¹³ There is a decline of the fat in the diets of Americans. Between 1988 and 1991, the average American's diet consisted of 34% fat, down from 36% just a decade earlier. This is significant because it has been shown that dietary fat is linked with cancer and heart disease.¹⁴

Victimization of Elderly

Since larger numbers of the population are aging, it is expected that there will be a corresponding increase in crime victims. In addition, elderly citizens' fear of crime could very well alter their lifestyles. According to data from the National Crime Victimization Survey "Persons age 65 or older are the least likely of all age groups in the Nation to experience either lethal or non-lethal forms of criminal victimization."¹⁵ However, this same article points out that, while the

elderly are less likely to be a victim, when victimized they are more likely to suffer more serious injuries.¹⁶

American society has established that it will not accept the victimization of a segment of the population that is less able to protect itself. For example, child welfare advocates have lobbied very successfully for many years to prevent child abuse and neglect. The issue of elder victimization is a serious matter and will require more attention from law enforcement as more and more of the population ages. It is reasonable to assume that, as the population ages, so will the number of elders victimized and the number of contacts the police will have with the elderly.

As people age, they face many new challenges. Their health may decline and they may not be able to see and hear as well as before. They may lose some of their agility and strength thereby making them more vulnerable to crime and less able to resist attack. As this occurs, they may not be as mobile as they once were, less able to care for themselves, and they may spend more time at home. This, in turn, will make them more susceptible to crime because they will depend on others to do chores, run errands, or provide other services. Those service providers will have more access to the elderly person's home where their valuables and money are kept for easy accessibility.

In addition, the elderly are more susceptible to non-violent crimes of economic gain. Some examples include home repair schemes, income creation frauds, and mail order fraud. There is also the "power of attorney fraud" through which the elderly are financially exploited through the mismanagement of their income and assets.¹⁷ There could very well be more such cases if the trend of poverty for those people over age 65 continues to rise.¹⁸ The elderly who

move in with their children or other relatives to share costs may be subjected to the possibility of having their assets misappropriated.

These types of crimes can also occur in residential care homes for the elderly and convalescent hospitals. Barbara Stewart, age 68, an Ombudsman for the elderly in San Joaquin County, was interviewed and talked about a variety of types of financial crimes against the elderly. According to Stewart, the elderly are victimized by having money removed from their checking accounts and their Social Security checks diverted from them.¹⁹ In cases such as these, Stewart says arrangements are made with a bank for the checks to be deposited directly into their accounts. Even then, there are horror stories of elders having large sums of money stolen by bank employees and care home personnel working together to accomplish the criminal act.

In addition to the rise in economic crimes against the elderly increasing as this population grows, it is likely that the incidents of elder abuse and violent crimes against them will correspondingly rise. It is the responsibility of law enforcement at least in part to educate elderly citizens about these crimes of economic gain, elder abuse, as well as crimes of violence such as robbery and assault, so they can be prevented.

Another concern in the arena of elder victimization is the lack of adequate health care in some convalescent and residential care homes. According to Ombudsman Stewart, she has seen cases in residential care homes where a menu that fit State of California nutrition guidelines was posted, but residents were not actually being provided the food listed. She also tells of elderly patients not receiving the proper physical care. An example provided was one in which she found a female patient with limited mobility who kept a "pot" in the closet of her room that was filled

with urine. The woman used this "pot" as a bathroom because the facility did not provide assistance or equipment to fit her needs.²⁰

Stewart says the elderly who are being victimized and not properly cared for are in what she calls a "Catch 22" situation. They should report abuses, but are afraid that if they do they will be asked to leave the facility or be abused by staff.²¹

A discussion of elder victimization would not be complete without an examination of their fear of crime. Many elderly people perceive themselves as more vulnerable to crime because of their age, frailty and the sensationalism given certain crimes in the media. Others are afraid because their economic circumstances cause them to live in depressed, deteriorating neighborhoods as well as other areas where the rate of crime may be higher.

This constant fear of crime can be debilitating to the elderly if they perceive the police can no longer protect them. In those cases where the elderly feel they are not being protected, they are likely to react by limiting their activities and staying home. This in turn can lead to isolation, loss of friends, acquaintances, and social activity. Again, the police have a responsibility to assist the elderly in this area so that their fears, whether actual or perceived, are reduced.

Programs to Assist the Elderly

How then will law enforcement deal with the expected increase in the elderly population and the associated concerns and problems? Some law enforcement administrators might argue that the issue of an increasing elderly population is a social issue more appropriately handled by a social service agency. This has been the view of those aligned with the more traditional methodologies of policing. However, with the introduction of Community Based Policing

strategies into modern law enforcement agencies, the hard lines between police work and social work have either faded or been erased entirely.

Others, including this author, believe the elderly constituent, as is the case with other constituents, should turn to law enforcement first for assistance and guidance. Law enforcement has to "be there" for them. To that end, the police must first recognize that the aging of America is in fact an irreversible, ongoing social change. Secondly, the police must educate the community, including the persons who are now elderly, about this issue. The police have an obligation to work with the elderly, other service providers, community leaders and other law enforcement agencies to see to it that elderly citizens receive services according to their need.

One emerging concept that addresses some of the concerns the elderly face in America is known as the "Triad." A Triad is a cooperative effort between police chiefs, sheriffs and the AARP designed to represent the elderly population in any given area. The Triad combines resources in order to meet the needs of their elderly population with respect to crime prevention, victim assistance, and information and access to social service agencies.²²

Examples of Triads at work can be found in Rhode Island, Ohio, and Illinois, where officers are trained and then designated as "elderly service officers or senior advocates."²³ Another example of a Triad providing services to the elderly can be found in Bridgeport, Connecticut, where a safety program helps elderly persons living in high risk neighborhoods manage their grocery shopping safely. Others involved in this program include local grocery stores who provide transportation for elderly citizens on shopping trips.²⁴

While the above cities represent shining examples of what can be accomplished to assist the elderly, they only represent a few law enforcement agencies with programs for the elderly

designed to reduce victimization and the fear of crime. Law enforcement agencies in much of the country do not have such extensive programs, including San Joaquin County in California. As time slips by and more citizens become seniors, there will be a greater need for the police to provide similar programs. The police would be wise to forecast their needs now and build the infrastructure of such programs into their agency.

San Joaquin County law enforcement managers should consider a review of their department's programs for the elderly, determine the needs of the elderly population locally, then develop a training curriculum for their police officers and the elderly in their community. First, they should review the training curriculum for neighborhood watch groups and public service presentations to assess the amount of training being directed toward the elderly population.

Next, a review of training curriculum for officers with respect to the elderly should be conducted to determine how it compares to the training given by progressive agencies in this area that were mentioned earlier in this paper. If the review shows that curriculum for law enforcement agencies in the County of San Joaquin is lacking in this area, new curriculum should be developed to include an overview of issues affecting the elderly. Examples include victimization statistics, education on the types of crimes to which the elderly are most susceptible, as well as crime prevention and interview techniques.

Law enforcement managers would be wise to interview police officers and elderly constituents regarding their perceptions of what is needed in this arena. They may find, as the author did, that good police officers adapt and fill a void when a formal strategy is lacking. For example, while doing research in this area and talking with officers it was learned that some of them had actually informally "adopted" elderly constituents on their beats and were checking on

them regularly. This sharing of information and expertise will enrich training and garner needed support by the police officers.

It is recommended that law enforcement agencies begin working with Community Service Officers to develop safety seminars. To that end, a few elderly members of police department volunteer programs could be very helpful in actually developing the curriculum. These safety seminars can be held at various locations in the city in order to better accommodate the participants. Examples of meeting locations include malls, library meeting rooms, the main police facility, sub-stations, and fire departments.

During the introduction to this article, the author mentioned he was surprised that a panel of community members whom he consulted with were not very concerned with the elderly being victimized by non-violent crimes for economic gain. In spite of publicized accounts of very prominent people, such as the 89-year-old widow of aviator Charles Lindbergh being embezzled out of \$250,000, this apparent lack of concern is troubling and may exist to a large extent because people, including the elderly, are not aware of the types of economic crime to which they are susceptible.²⁵ In fact, one elderly citizen the author spoke with was aghast when he learned about some of the ways the elderly were being economically victimized. To that end, the author believes law enforcement agencies should take a leadership role and make efforts to provide public awareness classes to educate the elderly in this area.

As for the future, law enforcement agencies should follow the trend in the communications technology arena. As the level of that technology increases and becomes more affordable, its use should be leveraged to enhance service delivery to the elderly.

While researching and consulting with community members for this paper, the author learned that they felt law enforcement should utilize technology to provide crime prevention information. They thought this could be done over the local cable television channel. When the author mentioned interactive television technology, the community members said they felt private industry should provide law enforcement with equipment to make it easier for the elderly to stay in touch with physicians, the police and other government officials.

A significant portion of the population does not realize there is an aging of America nor the implications this trend will have. An important component to the programs for the elderly is the training aspect associated with them. Police Officers must be trained on the issue of aging, some of the implications such as victimization, fear of crime, and a probable increase in the traditional "non-police" type calls.

Programs for the elderly must be developed and training needs met in spite of budget crunches. One of the bigger challenges to the police in this area will be funding the new programs. Citizens can expect government to seek assistance from the private sector in the form of volunteers, business grants and partnerships, fees and possibly taxes.

It would be imprudent of the police to not begin responding to the inevitable aging of America and the needs of the elderly. Because there will be so many elderly persons, they will naturally have a corresponding voice in their future. This "voice" is being broadcast by the more than 32 million members of the AARP, a non-profit agency established in 1958. There are presently over 350,000 volunteers serving 4,000 local AARP chapters.²⁶

In the future, organizations like the AARP, as well as other elder advocacy groups, will undoubtedly continue to grow. These groups will demand a high quality of life and will be strong

politically and sophisticated. They will continue to push for legislation that will improve their quality of life and protect them from abuse. One such example in California was Assembly Bill 3477, that requires state certified health-care aides who work with senior citizens to undergo a background check by the Department of Justice. This bill was signed by Governor Pete Wilson and became law on September 30, 1994.²⁷

A recent event in San Joaquin County that illustrates the strong political influence of the elderly was the June 1994 Primary election. Out of a total of 229,648 registered voters in San Joaquin County, 56,620 or 24.6% are age 65 or older. Out of the 56,620 registered voters age 65 or older, in the County of San Joaquin 23,266 or 41% voted in the 1994 June Primary election compared to 33% of the total registered voters in the county who actually voted.²⁸

The preceding information has established the importance and the utility of conducting further research in this area. It has also caused the author to consider how a medium-sized police agency such as the Stockton Police Department would respond to the needs of the elderly population in the future. Law enforcement managers will need to determine how to execute the financial strategies necessary to provide for the services of the elderly population, given recent budget crunches in San Joaquin County.

Case Study-The Stockton, California, Police Department

In order to determine the best method for the Stockton Police Department to provide for the service demands of the elderly, a strategic plan was developed. Several alternative strategies were considered with the list of choices being narrowed to three alternatives. The three alternative strategies under consideration were; 1) Establish an "Elderly Support Services"

Division within the Police Department, 2) Form a partnership between the Stockton Police Department and the local chapter of the AARP to identify needed services of the elderly population, and, 3) Form a County-wide consortium with all law enforcement agencies and the AARP to identify services needed by the elderly population.

The third strategy, Form a County-wide consortium with all law enforcement agencies and the AARP to identify services needed by the elderly population, was chosen as the preferred strategy. This would provide the mechanism for all law enforcement agencies in the county to combine resources and talents in order to identify services needed by the elderly. A consortium would reduce the redundancy of individual cities conducting their own research and individual strategies with regard to the services needed by the elderly residents. This strategy is a more global approach to the issue, is expected to be the most effective, long term approach, is very feasible and enjoys a very high degree of stakeholder support.

The initiative for this strategy would begin with the Stockton Police Department bringing the various agencies together in order to provide an overview of the issue, discussion of the need to become involved and the benefits of forming a consortium. It is expected that there would be wide spread support and a planning committee of senior level policy makers can be formed. The committee should also enlist the services of the local chapter of AARP which is an important stakeholder.

There will probably be high start-up costs, but this will likely be compensated for over time as these costs are shared by several agencies, and post crime investigation costs will be reduced. In addition, resources may be forthcoming from private and public donors. The possibility of receiving a federal or state grant should also be explored. The implementation phase

of the strategic plan will take place over a thirty-six month time period, with program evaluation continuing as long as the consortium exists.

Transition Management

Transition management is an essential element when implementing a strategic plan and in changing the manner in which an organization operates. A transition management plan was developed by first considering the stakeholders' range of influence and their level of commitment to the proposed change of forming a County-wide consortium. It was important to critically assess the various stakeholders, then identify the minimum number of key individuals or groups, who, through their support/influence, could ensure delivery of the plan.

Each individual or group has a certain level of commitment and may well need to be moved to a different and higher level. For those individuals or groups who need to be moved to another level of commitment, intervention strategies can be employed. For example, it was determined that the Stockton Police Chief was committed to "helping the change" of forming a County-wide consortium happen. Because of his influential and powerful position, it is critical he move from a position of "helping the change" happen to a position of "making the change" happen.

The Stockton Police Chief is responsible for the achievement of community-based policing agency-wide at the Stockton Police Department. He has restructured the command staff at the Police Department and pushed decision-making down to the lowest level possible to facilitate the community-based policing philosophy. In addition, he has been a strong advocate of customer service, fiscal responsibility, and the accountability of all personnel. The Stockton Police Chief

has shown a strong commitment toward forming partnerships with other law enforcement and governmental agencies within the County of San Joaquin to solve mutual problems.

The strategic plan should be presented to the Stockton Police Chief so that he is made aware of how this plan responds to the community's demands that public agencies work together to solve mutual problems. Further, due to the current state of the economy, the forming of a consortium is the most feasible approach to the issue of how police agencies will provide services to the elderly population. Last, this approach conforms to the community-based policing philosophy shared by law enforcement agencies in the County. For these reasons, the author believes the Stockton Police Chief should champion the strategic plan and take the lead to "make the change" happen.

After intervention strategies were developed and tailored specifically to all key individuals and groups, the author developed a temporary management structure to manage the transition period until a County-wide consortium could be formed. It was felt the transition management structure that would create the least tension and provide the most opportunity to facilitate change is a project manager who would chair a steering committee during the transition period.

The most senior Police Captain from the Stockton Police Department was designated to be project manager since he has the requisite knowledge and experience. In addition he has solid interpersonal skills, he is widely known and trusted, and he enjoys professional relationships with most of the senior police executives throughout the county. Last, it was felt the announcement and endorsement by the Stockton Police Captain's selection as the project manager would give him the necessary clout to effectively manage the transition state.

Technologies And Techniques To Support And Implement Change

To effectively manage the change to a County-wide consortium, a number of technologies and techniques must be employed to support the implementation of that change. By utilizing the appropriate technologies and techniques, anxieties associated with the change will be reduced.

The following should be utilized in order to support the change:

- ▶ **Team Building**-The Stockton Police Chief, project manager and the steering committee members should participate in team building sessions.
- ▶ **Newsletter**-A newsletter should be developed and circulated regularly to employees of all organizations represented in the steering committee. In addition, this newsletter should utilize target mailing strategies in order to reach as many members of the elderly population as possible.
- ▶ **Local Cable Television and Radio Announcements**-Soundbites on both the local cable and radio networks should be utilized to inform the public about the formation of the County-wide consortium and the composition of the steering committee.
- ▶ **Focus Groups**-Meetings with focus groups from the elderly community, citizens at large and employees from the steering committee's agencies should be held to solicit input on the planned change.

Implementation Plan

A two year implementation plan has been developed with specific items to be accomplished during that period of time. The plan begins with the Chief of Police deciding to

adopt the strategic plan, and ends after the second year when the County-wide Consortium is formalized. The consortium will then be evaluated quarterly on an ongoing basis.

Implementation Obstacles

With any plan there are a number of obstacles. The author anticipates that because many of the agencies involved in the consortium have less political clout and resources to contribute to the Consortium, there may be a reluctance to expend monies to supply the services needed by the elderly population in those communities. This can be overcome by including language in an Operational Plan that ensures that each community receives services proportionate to the elderly population in that community.

Other special interest groups i.e., youth groups, ethnic groups, and physically challenged citizens, may object that they are not receiving similar treatment. Their anxieties can be reduced by including them in the initial planning stages and pointing out that members of their group are included in the elderly community.

Last, the purchase of supporting technology is a concern during the present budget crisis. This can be minimized by funding this technology through the Remote Access network (RAN) Board from fines collected by the County or donations from local businesses.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The trend of the aging of the population has been identified as an issue that will affect law enforcement to a substantial degree in the future, which has caused this author to consider how a medium-sized police agency such as the Stockton Police Department could provide for the needs

of the elderly population in the future. In addition, law enforcement managers must determine how to execute the financial strategies necessary to provide for the services of the elderly population, given recent "budget crunches" in San Joaquin County.

It has been determined that the best strategy for the Stockton Police Department to deal with the issue is by forming a County-wide Consortium with all law enforcement agencies and the AARP. This strategy is also being recommended to other medium-sized police agencies for consideration.

There is a need for additional research in this area. The author recommends law enforcement professionals take the next logical step and develop a strategic plan to determine what the service demands of the elderly population will be in the future. While there may be some service demands of the elderly that are general in nature and not area specific, it will be essential for those professionals to be aware that some of their demands may only apply to a certain jurisdiction. The challenge then, will be for the law enforcement professional to be sensitive to this fact and ensure the elderly's service demands are met in all jurisdictions.

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